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(54) Abstract Title

Data card connector

(57) A data card connector has connector contacts (74) for contacting data card contacts (73) to couple the data card contracts (73) to circuitry. The connector contacts (74) are positioned to contact respective data card contacts (73) when the data card (71) is located in the connector (72) in a first orientation (Figure 7a), and so that only one data card contact (73b) is contacted by any one of them when the data card (71) is located in the connector (72) in a second orientation, 180 degrees rotated from the first (Figure 7b). The VPP contact (74b) in the connector is not connected to any circuitry.

Fig.7(a).

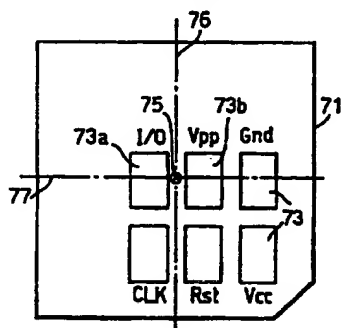


Fig.7(b).

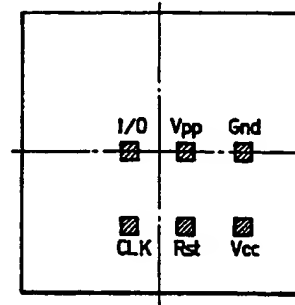
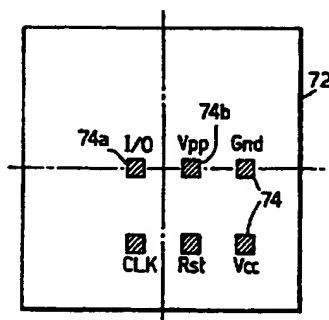
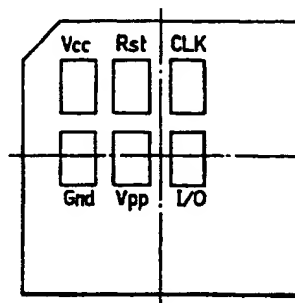


Fig. 1a.

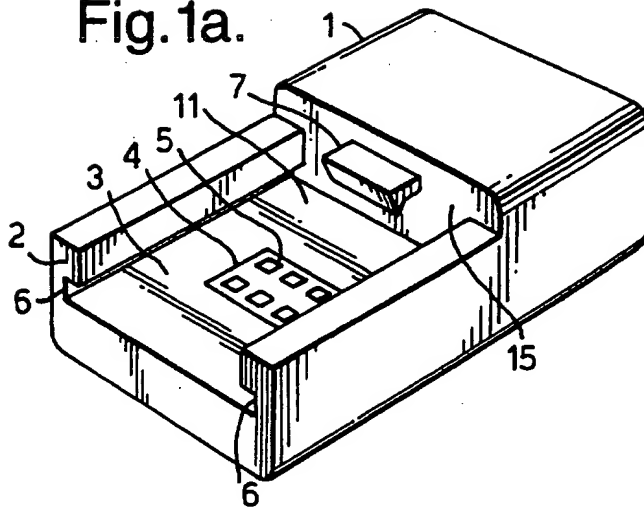


Fig. 1b.

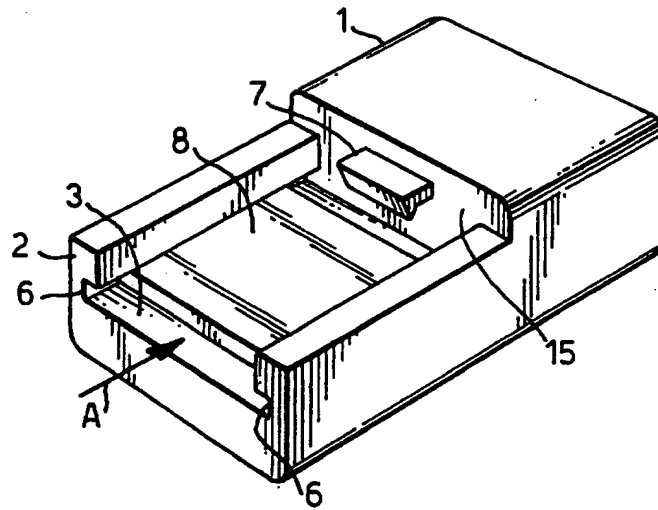


Fig. 1c.

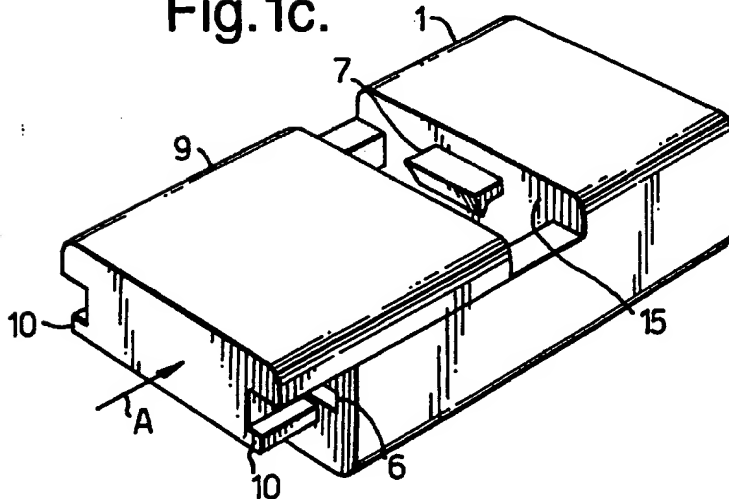


Fig. 1d.

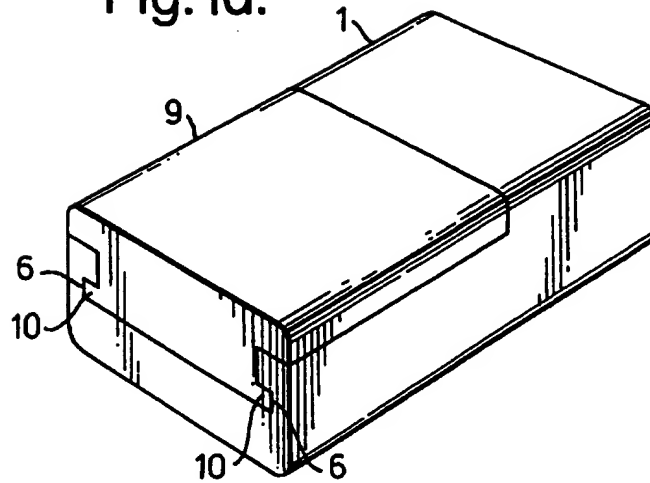


Fig. 2.

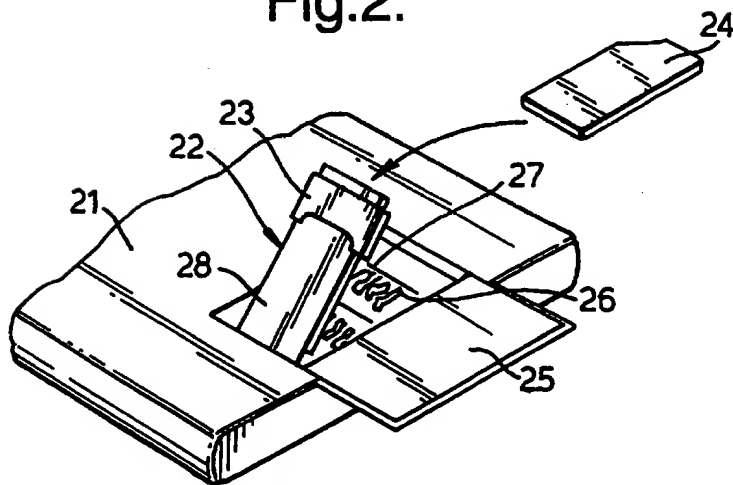


Fig.3.

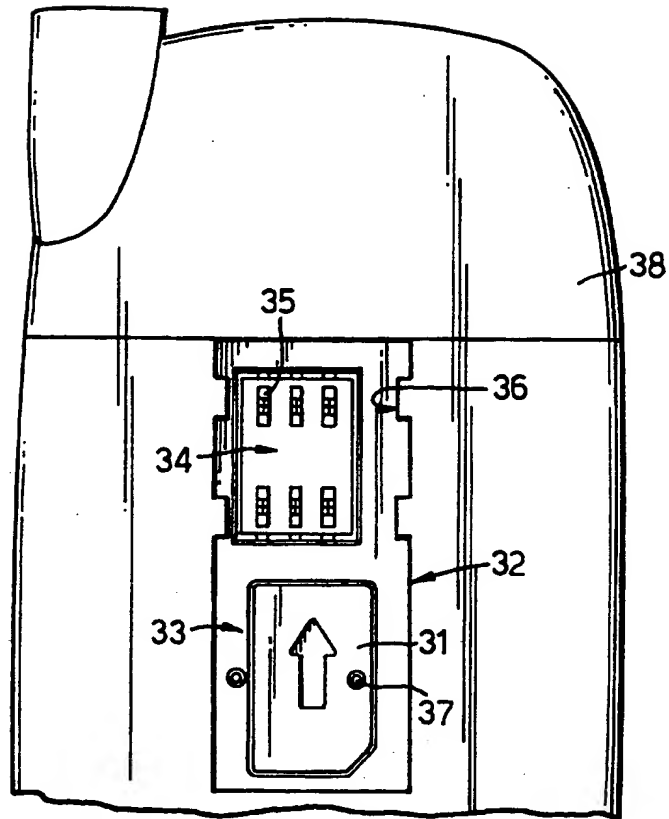
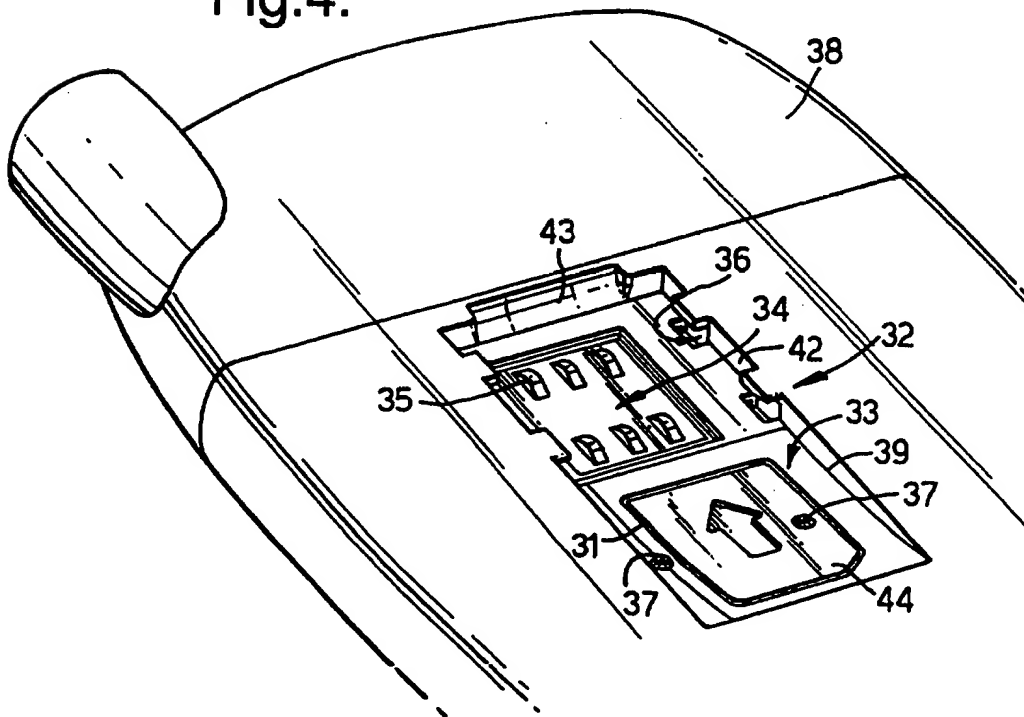


Fig.4.



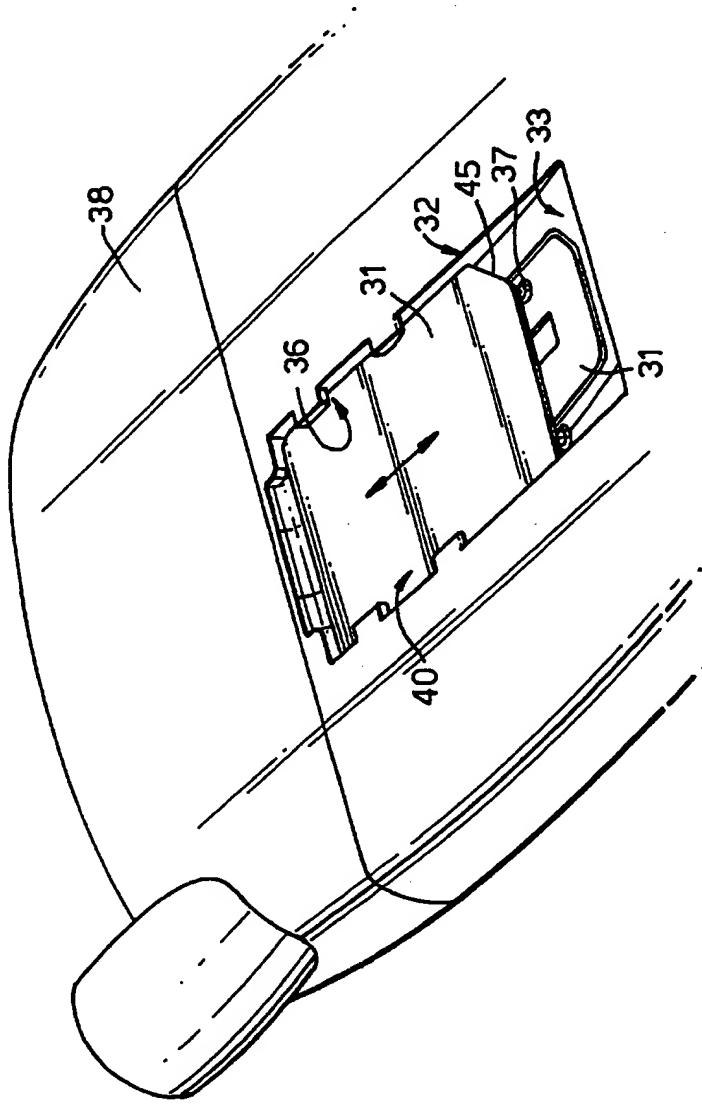


Fig. 5.

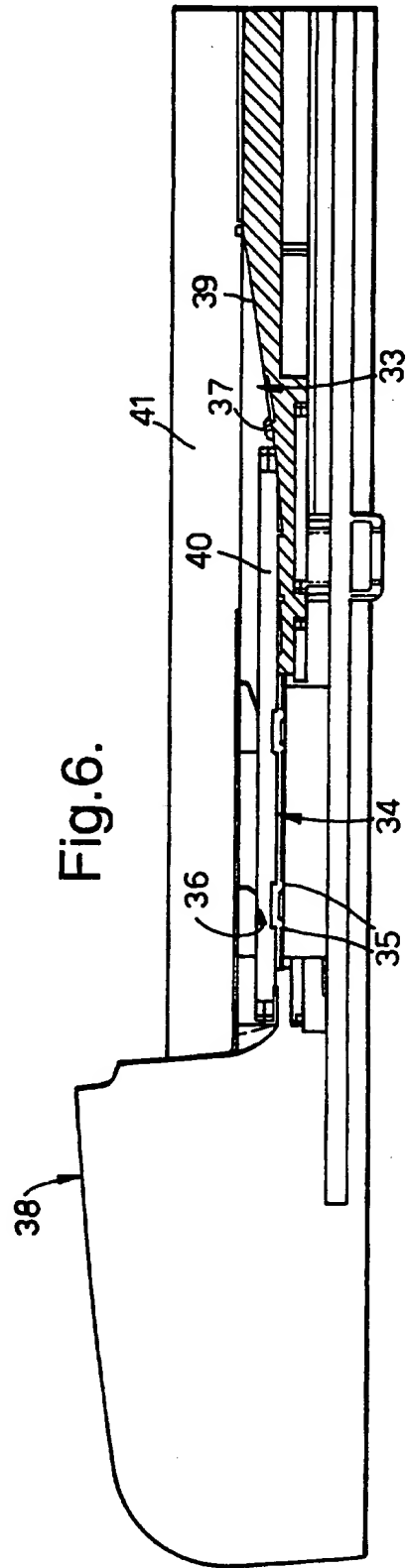


Fig. 6.

Fig.7(a).

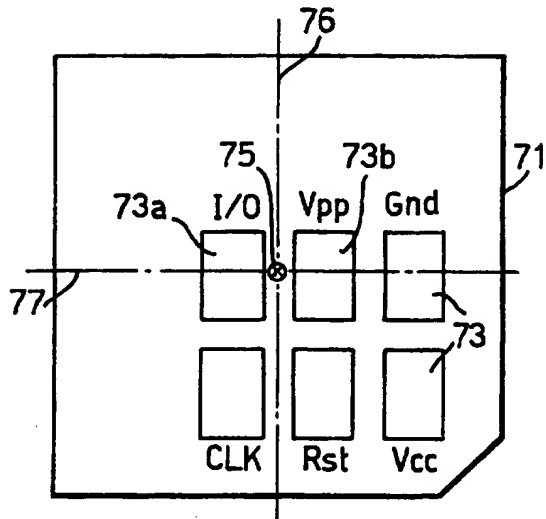


Fig.7(b).

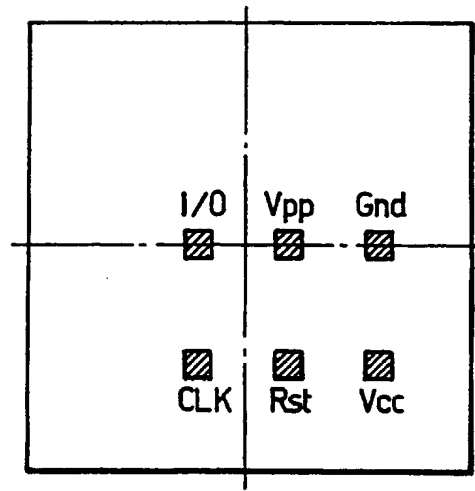
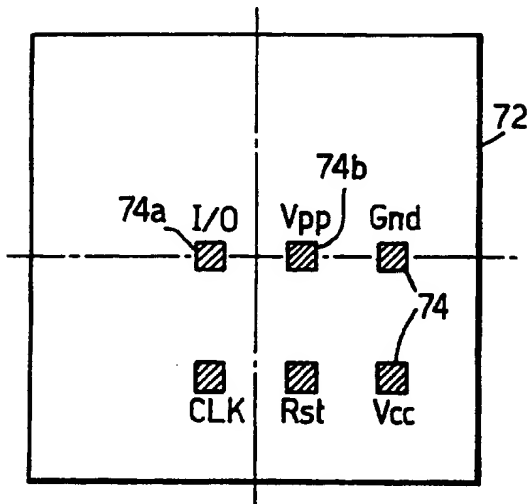
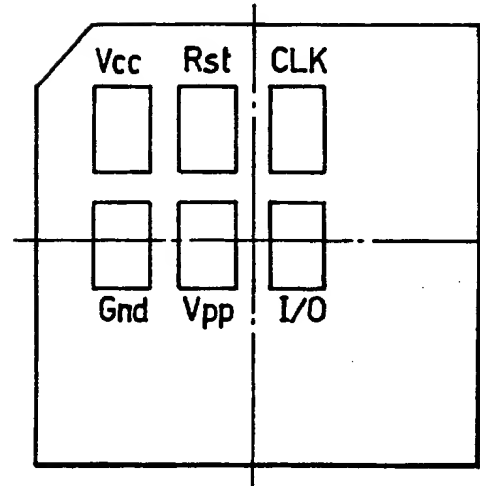


Fig.8(a).

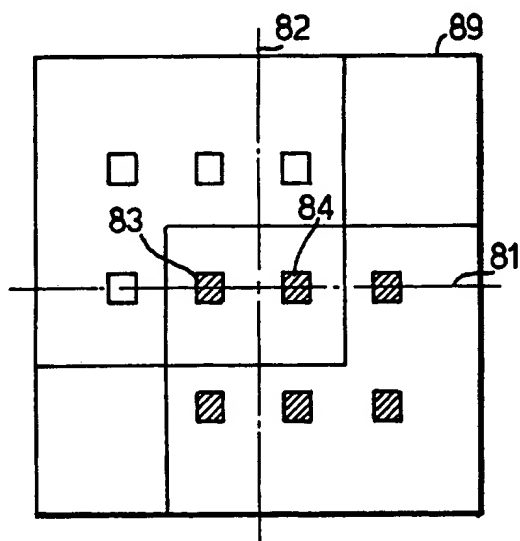


Fig.8(b).

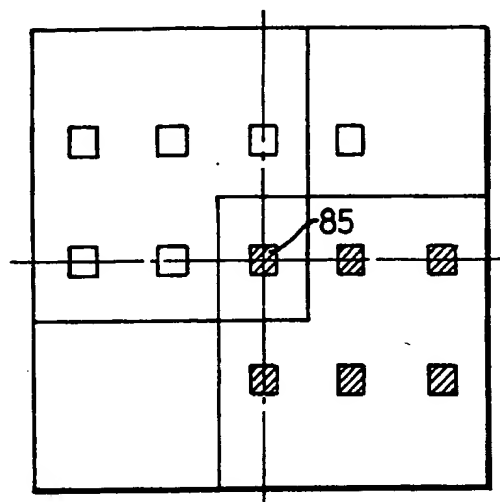


Fig.8(c).

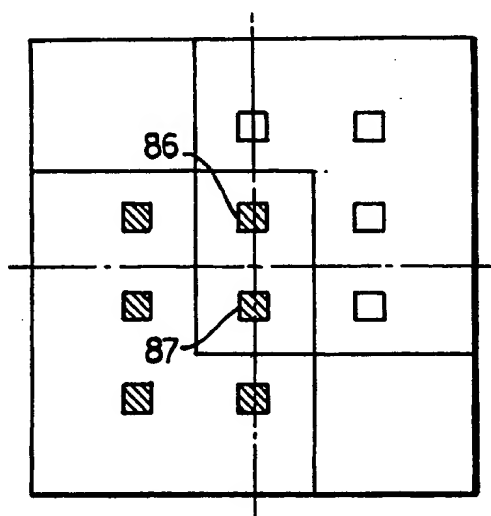
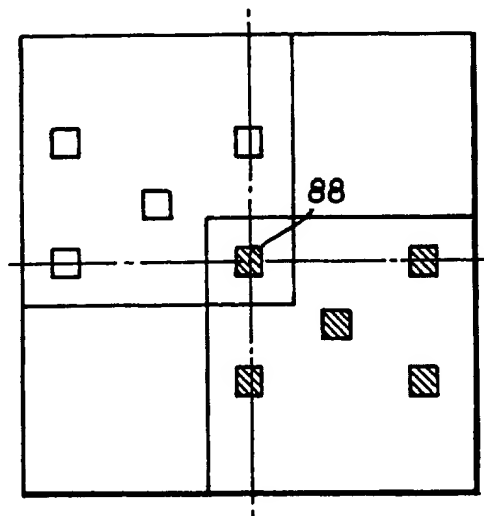


Fig.8(d).



A DATA CARD CONNECTOR

This invention relates to a connector for a memory module. In particular, it relates to a connector for a data card, which may, for example, form part of a radiotelephone housing.

Memory modules such as data cards are known, for example, in cellular radiotelephones, which may be removably inserted into the telephone. A data card may be a passive memory card (i.e. essentially a ROM), or an active processor card (i.e. capable of processing information internally within the card). Data, such as identity information, is read from the inserted card and used in the subsequent operation of the telephone. The data card may be, for example, a "smart card" which is similar in size to a conventional plastic credit card and which includes a memory implemented as an integrated circuit device, commonly referred to as a "chip", in which information is stored. For this reason such cards are also often known as "chip cards".

The smart card may comprise a subscriber identity module (SIM). Also, In addition to subscriber identity information, such as the subscriber telephone number, and personal identification number (PIN), the smart card may store for example, call charge information (i.e. a charge meter), a telephone number index, or false PIN entries.

SIM cards are currently available in two sizes. The functionality of the SIM is the same for each, it is essentially that the physical dimensions are different. One is a credit card size SIM, the other is a plug-in SIM about 15mm x 20mm. The rationale behind the different sizes is that the credit card size is perceived as a convenient size for the user from a practical standpoint. However, the credit card size is relatively large, and smaller card sizes are needed as miniaturization continues to

drive down the overall size of the terminal (i.e. the radio telephone unit itself). The plug-in SIM is intended to be semi-permanently installed in the cellular telephone.

Figures 1a to 1d of the accompanying drawings illustrate an arrangement for securing a SIM card in, and coupling it to, a mobile telephone, as disclosed in EP 0 679 002. This arrangement enables a credit-card sized SIM card 8 to be attached to a mobile telephone by providing the mechanical frame or casing 1 of the telephone with a pair of grooves 6, into which the SIM card 8 can be slid longitudinally with one end first. On the surface of the mobile telephone facing the SIM card 8 there is a SIM connector 4, with a number of generally flexible connector lugs 5 that make electrical contact with the contact pads on the respective surface of the SIM card 8. The grooves are also used to slide a rechargeable battery unit 9, having corresponding guides 10, into place so that once properly installed, the battery unit 9 essentially covers the SIM card. In the battery unit there is often included a spring that exerts a force against the surface of the mobile telephone or the SIM card 8 while the battery unit 9 is in place, in order to keep the battery unit (and the SIM card) tightly fastened. If the card is inserted wrong edge first, the no SIM card contact pads make contact with the connector lugs 5 of the connector 4.

One problem with the aforementioned arrangement is that it is adapted for use with full size SIM cards, which inhibit the reduction in size of a telephone. Also, the card cannot be readily inserted as it has to be aligned with the pair of grooves 6 before it can be slid longitudinally into position. Moreover, when the battery unit 9 of the mobile telephone is detached from the frame 1 of the mobile telephone, the SIM card tends to slide over the connector lugs 5. Since there is capacitive energy stored in the telephone, the SIM card 8 can be easily damaged while sliding over the connector lugs 5.

Figure 2 of the accompanying drawings illustrates a known arrangement for securing a plug-in SIM card in a mobile telephone. On one surface of the mobile telephone facing the SIM card 24 there is a SIM connector 27 having connector lugs 27. The arrangement also comprises a hinged SIM card holder 22 with a lock 23 for

maintaining the contacts of the SIM card in contact with the connector lugs 26 of the SIM connector 27. The SIM card 24 is inserted in the mobile telephone as follows. Firstly, the SIM card is placed in the holder 22 between the hinged portion 28 and the lock 23. Then the holder is pivoted to the SIM connector and locked by sliding the lock 23 until it connects with a corresponding part on the surface of the mobile telephone facing the SIM card 24. Finally, the SIM card compartment is closed by a cover 25.

The manufacturing process of a mobile telephone comprising such an arrangement is complicated by the number of parts of the hinged mechanism. Also, the arrangement requires a large compartment in the telephone casing. Further, the card 24 cannot be readily inserted as it has to be aligned between the hinged portion 28 and the lock 23 before it can be slid longitudinally into the position in which it needs to be locked. Moreover, the SIM card and compartment have to be adapted so that the card can only be put in the correct way around. Otherwise, incorrect contact between the card and mobile telephone might take place which could damage the card.

According to the present invention, there is provided a data card connector, comprising connector contacts for contacting data card contacts to couple the data card contacts to circuitry, the connector contacts being positioned to contact respective data card contacts when the data card is located in the connector in a first orientation, and so that only one data card contact is contacted by any one of them when the data card is located in the connector in a second orientation, 180 degrees rotated from the first.

Such a connector prevents the risk of damage to the data card if the data card is inserted incorrectly.

The connector contacts may be positioned so that, with the data card in the second orientation, only one connector contact is in contact with the said data card contact. In this event, when the data card is in the first orientation the said connector contact

is in contact with any of one of the data card contacts. However, preferably, it is in contact with the said data card contact which makes contact with a connector contact in the first orientation. This said connector contact may be positioned centrally. Alternatively, it may be positioned centrally with respect to only one of the major axes of the data card when the data card is located in the connector.

The data card connector may optionally further comprise a terminal positioned so that, with the data card in the second orientation, the terminal contact is in contact with a further data card contact. The terminal contact may be positioned centrally with respect to only one of the major axes of the data card when the data card is located in the connector. The provision of a terminal contact enables a small connector and data card to be used for the same connector arrangements.

The data card connector preferably further comprises means for locating the data card. These locating means may comprise protrusions in the supporting surface of a data card housing.

The connector contacts and any terminal contact of the data card connector may be symmetrical.

The data card may form part of a radiotelephone.

Embodiments of the present invention are illustrated, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figures 1a-d illustrate a prior art arrangement for securing a credit card size SIM card in, and coupling it to, a mobile telephone;

Figure 2 illustrates a prior art arrangement for securing a plug-in SIM card in, and coupling it to, a mobile telephone;

Figure 3 is a top view of a mobile telephone comprising a data card housing according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the mobile telephone of Figure 3;

Figure 5 is a perspective view of the mobile telephone of Figure 3 with the data card in the reading position;

Figure 6 is a cross section of the mobile telephone of Figure 3 with the data card in the reading position;

Figure 7 shows the connections between the data card and the card reader, depending on which way around the card is inserted in the data card housing; and

Figure 8 shows data cards having various contact layouts, each data card shown located in the reading position in both a correct first orientation and a second orientation, 180 degrees rotated from the first.

Figures 3 to 6 are schematic views of a data card housing in a mobile phone according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Mobile phone housing 38 is provided with a SIM card housing 32. The SIM card housing 32 has a space being laterally defined by side walls 42 of the housing 32 and a transverse wall 43, and having a support surface 31 onto which the card is placed. The space has two regions, a loading region 33 and a reading region 34.

The support surface 31 has an opening for a SIM card connector in the reading region. The connector has a plurality of contacts 35 which, with a SIM card 40 in a reading position, will join corresponding contact areas on the card 40, as shown in Figure 6. The support surface 31 in the loading region is sloped towards the reading region to act as a guide ramp 39 for the card 40.

The side walls 42 are provided with guide grooves 36 in the reading region 34, the guide grooves 36 being defined by the support surface 33 and sized so that the card 40 edges engage them as the card 40 is inserted into position in the longitudinal direction of the mobile phone and the card 40, indicated by the arrow in Figures 3 and 4. The guide grooves 36 serve to position the card in the lateral direction, and to stop it essentially totally from moving in any direction other than the longitudinal one.

The transverse wall 43 of the SIM card housing 32 prevents the card from overshooting the reading position in the longitudinal direction when the card is inserted in the housing. The SIM card housing 32 is also provided with pips 37 on the supporting surface in the loading region, to prevent the card from moving from the reading position in a longitudinal direction back towards the loading region.

The space in this embodiment is covered by a battery 41, as is illustrated in Figure 6. The battery 41 may, for example, comprise guides which engage corresponding guide grooves on the mobile phone 38. Alternatively, the space can be covered by a hinged lid, for example.

Insertion and removal of the SIM card 40 from the SIM card housing 32 occurs as follows. The SIM card 40 is inserted into the housing 32 by initially placing it in the loading region 33, either by sliding the card 40 in the longitudinal direction down the ramp 39 or by dropping it through the open face onto the ramp 39. Then, pressure is applied to the top surface of the card, so that it is slid along the support surface 33 in the longitudinal direction towards the reading region 34. The SIM card 40 is inserted into the guide grooves 36 by the sliding action to prevent lateral movement of the card. Alignment of the card for insertion into the guide grooves is facilitated by the side walls 42 in the loading region. The card continues to be slid until it has completely cleared the pips 37 and its front edge contacts the transverse wall 43. Once the card has reached this position its contact areas communicate with the contacts 34 of the SIM card connector and it is in the reading position. The SIM card is retained in this position by the guide grooves 36 and the pips 37. Finally, in

this embodiment, the battery 41 is attached to the mobile phone 38 by engaging its guides with the corresponding guide grooves on the mobile phone 38.

The SIM card 40 is removed from the housing 32, in this embodiment, by firstly detaching the battery 41 from the mobile phone 38. Then, pressure is applied to the top surface of the card 40, so that it is slid along the support surface 33 in the longitudinal direction towards the loading region 33, and over the pips 37. The SIM card 40 continues to be slid until it is free of the guide grooves 36. Once the card has reached this position it can be removed from the SIM card housing, either by sliding it up the guide ramp 39 or tipping it out through the open face.

The SIM card can be damaged if it is inserted the wrong way around, so that incorrect connections are made between the SIM card connector contacts 35 and the contact pads of the SIM card. In view of this, the SIM card housing 32 and/or the SIM card 40 may be provided with suitable identification means 44, 45 respectively, so that the user can easily place the card 40 in the correct direction into the housing 32. In the present embodiment one of the corners 45 of the card 40 is sloped and an outline of the correct positioning of the card is impressed on the support surface 31 of the SIM card housing in the loading region, as is shown in Figures 3 and 4. As well as this attempt to get the user to insert the SIM card the correct way around, the preferred embodiment of the present invention protects against damage to the SIM card caused by incorrect insertion of the SIM card, as explained below.

Figure 7 shows the correspondence of contacts of a data card 71 and a data card connector 72 for two orientations of the data card. In this embodiment, the connector 72 is arranged to couple a data card in the form of a SIM card having six contacts, to electronic circuitry of a radiotelephone. The SIM card and connector each have GND and VCC contacts for power to be applied to the SIM card, for example, from a battery of the radiotelephone. They also have control contacts, I/O (data), CLK, and RST, for transferring data between the SIM card and the phone. Finally, they have a VPP contact, which is conventionally used for applying a

programming voltage to a SIM card, by connecting the VPP contact of the connector to VCC. However, in this embodiment of the present invention, the VPP contact of the connector is not connected to VCC, or indeed any circuitry of the phone. Instead, it is merely a terminal for the VPP contact of the SIM card.

In the first orientation (Figure 7a), the card 71 is the correct way round. In this case, the contacts 73 of the data card correspond to, and make contact with, the respective contacts 74 of the connector 72. In the second orientation (Figure 7b), the card is in the same plane as in the first orientation, but is rotated about a central axis 75, which is perpendicular to the major axes 76, 77 of the card. This results in the contacting of the I/O contact 74a of the connector 72 with the VPP contact 73b of the SIM card 71, and the VPP contact 74b of the connector 72 with the I/O contact 73a of the SIM card 71. As mentioned above, the VPP contact 74b of the connector 72 is not connected to the circuitry of the phone. Hence, the SIM card is only coupled to the phone circuitry via the I/O contact 74a of the connector 72 and the VPP contact 73b of the SIM card 71. Since only one of the SIM card contacts 74 is coupled to the circuitry, no specification interface violation occurs, and the SIM card 71 is consequently not prone to damage. By contrast, an interface violation could occur when more than one of the SIM card contacts 74 is coupled to the circuitry, as in such a case a contact 74 of the connector 72 and a respective contact 73 of the SIM card 71 might be at different voltages. Take for example, the arrangement of Figure 7(b), but with the VPP contact 74b of the connector 72 connected to the VCC supply. In this case, the SIM card 71 would be coupled to the phone circuitry via the I/O contact 74a of the connector 72 and the VPP contact 73b of the SIM card 71 and also via the VPP contact 74b of the connector 72 and the I/O contact 73a of the SIM card 71. The VCC applied to the VPP contact 74b of the connector 72 would be forwarded to the I/O contact 73a of the SIM card 71. Also, it would cause the I/O contact 74a of the connector 72 to be forced to ground. The I/O contact 74a of the connector 72 would, in turn, forward the ground potential to the VPP contact 73b of the SIM card 71. Hence, the I/O contacts 73a, 74a would have different potentials and the VPP contact 73b of the SIM card 71 would be at ground potential, when it should be at VCC. Consequently, in contrast to the

aforementioned embodiment of the present invention, there would be an interface violation and the incorrect potentials on the SIM card 71 could damage it.

If the card is located at the reading position in this second orientation, the card is not powered. Hence, it will not reply to the phone when the phone "talks" to it (e.g. requests data). Preferably the user is informed that the card has been inserted incorrectly, for example, by displaying an appropriate message on the telephone display.

The card could also be incorrectly located at the reading position in a third orientation, where the card is rotated 180 degrees from the first orientation, about its major axis 76. In this event, none of the contacts would make contact and the phone would not be able to "talk" to the card. Typically, in this case, the phone would indicate to the user that the card has been inserted incorrectly.

Figure 8 shows data cards having various contact layouts, each data card shown located in the reading position of a data card housing according to embodiments of the present invention. The data cards are shown in a correct first orientation and a second orientation, in which the card is rotated 180 degrees from its first orientation, about a central axis, which is perpendicular to the major axes 81, 82 of the card. The contacts can be randomly placed on the card, or symmetrical as shown in Figure 8. Also, they may appear as a conventional array, such as the 3 x 2 arrays of Figures 8(a) and (b) and the 2 x 3 array of Figure 8(c), or as a pattern having some other form of symmetry, such as in Figure 8(d). In each case, the data card connector has respective contacts positioned to correspond to the data card contacts when it is located at the reading position the correct way around.

When the card is in the second orientation, one or two of the connector contacts may make contact with data card contacts. For example, in Figures 8(a) and 8(c), they make contact with two data card contacts 83, 84 and 86, 87 and in Figures 8(b) and 8(d), they make contact with one data card contact 85 and 88. When the connector contacts make contact with two data card contacts, only one of the

connector contacts couples one of the data card contacts to the electronic circuitry of the phone. The second connector contact is a terminal contact for the other data card contact. Consequently, voltages from the phone will not be likely to damage the data card.

When the connector contacts are arranged to make contact with two data card contacts, a smaller connector and data card can be used for the same data card contact arrangement. This can be seen from Figures 8(a) and (b). In Figure 8(a), the connector contacts make contact with two data card contacts 83, 84, in the second orientation, whereas in Figure 8(b) they only contact one data card connector 85. Consequently, the width of the card, and thus connector, (i.e. the distance along major axis 81), can be shorter in the former, by the distance between the centre of contacts 83 and 84, for example. Alternatively, for the same size SIM card, it enables the contacts to be spaced further apart along axis 81, so that short circuits are less likely to occur.

In view of the foregoing description it would be evident to a person skilled in the art that various modifications may be made within the scope of the claims. For example, the data card connector may comprise more than one terminal contact.

CLAIMS

1. A data card connector, comprising connector contacts for contacting data card contacts to couple the data card contacts to circuitry, the connector contacts being positioned to contact respective data card contacts when the data card is located in the connector in a first orientation, and so that only one data card contact is contacted by any one of them when the data card is located in the connector in a second orientation, 180 degrees rotated from the first.
2. A data card connector as claimed in claim 1, wherein the connector contacts are positioned so that, with the data card in the second orientation, only one connector contact is in contact with the said data card contact.
3. A data card connector as claimed in claim 2, wherein , with the data card in the first orientation the said connector contact is in contact with a data card contact.
4. A data card connector as claimed in claim 3, wherein, with the data card in the first orientation the said connector contact is in contact with the said data card contact.
5. A data card connector as claimed in any of claims 2 to 4, wherein the said connector contact is positioned centrally.
6. A data card connector as claimed in claim 2 or claim 5 when dependent upon claim 2, wherein the said connector contact is positioned centrally with respect to only one of the major axes of the data card when the data card is located in the connector.
7. A data card connector as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a terminal positioned so that, with the data card in the second orientation, the terminal contact is in contact with a further data card contact.

8. A data card connector as claimed in claim 7, wherein the terminal contact is positioned centrally with respect to only one of the major axes of the data card when the data card is located in the connector.
9. A data card connector as claimed in any preceding claim further comprising means for locating the data card.
10. A data card connector as claimed in claim 9, further comprising a data card housing having a supporting surface.
11. A data card connector as claimed in claim 10, wherein the locating means comprises protrusions in the supporting surface.
12. A data card connector as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein its contacts are symmetrical.
13. A radiotelephone comprising a data card connector as claimed in any preceding claim.
14. A data card connector substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to, and/or as illustrated in Figure 7 and/or 8 of the accompanying drawings with or without reference to any one, or any combination of, Figures 3 to 6.
15. A radiotelephone comprising a data card connector substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to, and/or as illustrated in Figure 7 and/or 8 of the accompanying drawings with or without reference to any one, or any combination of, Figures 3 to 6.



The Patent Office

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Application No: GB 9715808.3
Claims searched: 1 to 15

Examiner: John Donaldson
Date of search: 1 September 1997

Patents Act 1977 Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK CI (Ed.O): G4M(MBA, MBF, MCF)

Int CI (Ed.6): G06K 7/00, 7/01, 7/015, 7/04, 7/06, 17/00

Other: Online:WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	EP 0247368 A1 (ALLIED CORPORATION), see abstract	-

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